

Federal Government as much as \$1.5 trillion. In fact, Congressional Budget Office Director Douglas Elmendorf testified before the House Ways and Means Committee that the coverage proposals in this legislation would expand Federal spending on health care to a significant degree. He went on to say that in CBO's analysis so far, they didn't see other provisions in the legislation reducing Federal health spending by a corresponding degree.

To pay for this massive new government expansion, the legislation contains \$820 billion in new job-killing tax increases imposed on certain income filers, a majority of whom are small businesses, even while the country remains in a serious recession. Struggling middle class families need jobs and small businesses cannot afford to hire more workers while paying higher taxes. It's simple. People want to focus on creating jobs, not raising taxes. For this reason, the National Retail Federation, which represents the employers of one in five American workers, the National Federation of Independent Business, which represents over 350,000 small and independent businesses, the United States Chamber of Commerce, and the National Association of Manufacturers all strongly oppose the current health care reform legislation.

Rather than creating a massive government-managed health care bureaucracy that will dictate medical decisions from Washington, we should be concentrating our efforts on making health care more affordable for all Americans and giving them the freedom to choose the health care and health insurance plans that best fit their needs. Some important first steps toward real health care reform include creating health insurance tax credits, which will increase the affordability of health care for those who do not have access to employer-based health insurance, expanding health savings accounts, creating association health plans which allow employers to band together to purchase insurance coverage at lower rates for their employees, medical malpractice reform, which would discourage the practice of defensive medicine, and encouraging the establishment of a nationwide health information technology network which can reduce medical errors, save time, money and, most importantly, save lives.

While we can all agree that our current health care system is flawed, there are many different ideas about how to fix it. Republicans have solutions that will empower patients with choices, make high quality coverage more affordable, and protect and preserve the doctor-patient relationship. The most important principles in health care reform are holding down costs and preserving consumer choices. We already spend far more per person than any other country in the world. Reform must mean using the health care dollars we now spend in a smarter, more effective way. We should be pre-

serving and enhancing the ability of people to choose the plans that are tailored to their needs and the doctors that they trust to guide them, not putting more power in the hands of Washington bureaucrats.

HEALTH CARE REFORM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. COURTNEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. COURTNEY. Mr. Speaker, I also rise tonight to discuss the issue of health care. And again, we've just heard remarks which are part of a campaign really to try and, I believe, and I say this respectfully, mislead and scare people about what it is that the committees of this Congress are taking up and deliberating on. I'm on one of those committees, the Education and Labor Committee. And what my message would be here tonight is that Americans should not be alarmed. In fact, they should feel reassured about the fact that we are finally, in a serious, coherent way, trying to address a broken system. I know it's broken. I come from the State of Connecticut. Earlier this week, on Monday, there was a hearing at the State of Connecticut Department of Insurance where Blue Cross/Blue Shield came in asking for a 32 percent rate increase for its individual health insurance policies that they sell in the State of Connecticut. That's the status quo. That's the so-called patient-driven health care system that we have right now. Thirty-two percent increase. You can't blame that on Barack Obama. You can't blame that on a government-controlled system. That's the marketplace that exists today, and it is bankrupting individuals and families at an alarming rate. Twelve thousand Americans a day are losing their health insurance. What the bill is that we are offering and as part of this effort which the President will be talking about tonight is a way of trying to control those costs and to try and create some sort of stable system for individuals and American families.

Let me give you an example. For a single woman, working at a convenience store, earning about \$25,000 a year, if she went out today, before the 32 percent rate increase that Blue Cross is asking for, and tried to buy an individual insurance policy in Connecticut, it would be \$381.22 a month for a premium through the Blue Cross plan. It has a \$1,500 deductible, 20 and \$30 copays for primary care and specialist physicians, respectively, and an annual prescription drug benefit of only \$500. The bill that we're working on, which was reported out by the Education and Labor Committee on Friday, for an individual who's earning \$25,000 a year, their monthly premium would be \$158, less than 50 percent of what an individual is paying today, and that's without some kind of outrageous skyrocketing premium increase which

Blue Cross is asking for today under our broken system.

How do you do this? Well, the answer is very simple. And Members of Congress can answer it better than anybody because they should just look in the mirror and see the system that we have today for Members of Congress. We have the opportunity to be part of a purchasing exchange, a purchasing allowance which allows millions of Federal employees across the country to spread risk, to spread cost, and to offer a broader range of choices, private plans which Members of Congress have that opportunity to pick from. And that moderates, it stabilizes the cost of the system and allows the system to operate without these harsh pre-existing condition exclusions which if a person has a heart condition or a diabetic condition, which today in the individual market completely and totally excludes them from buying insurance at all.

Now if you ask your Member of Congress about their health insurance plan and the cost of increase which took place over the last year, you could ask a Member from Ohio, where the minority leader comes from, and what it would show is that there were increases from 2008 to 2009 of only \$10 a month for many of the plans. One of the Ohio plans which was offered to Members of Congress actually reduced its monthly payment. And this is because it's just a basic market principle, and that is what the Democratic plan is proposing for all Americans, which is that we will create a large purchasing exchange which will spread risk, which will protect individuals from pre-existing condition exclusions, and which will moderate and stabilize premium costs so that you would not face the 32 percent rate increases that insurance companies like Blue Cross are asking for back home in my State, the State of Connecticut.

We also add a public option as one of the choices that can be selected by Americans who participate in this purchasing exchange. Private plans and a public option as a way of keeping the system honest and making sure that we get every efficiency possible. But no one has to choose that public option. And no provider, no doctor, or hospital has to participate in it.

You would think, from the descriptions on the other side, that people are going to be marched at gunpoint into a government plan. The opposite is completely true. There will be open choice. There will be private plans that will be offered under that purchasing exchange and it will, again, allow people the benefits of spreading risk and spreading costs just like Members of Congress have today. Every taxpayer and every citizen of this country should ask that question of their Member when the time comes to vote: Are you prepared to stand up and vote for a plan which will give us what we give you?

□ 1845

35TH ANNIVERSARY OF INVASION
OF CYPRUS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BILIRAKIS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recall an anniversary that for the past 35 years has plagued the Cypriot and Hellenic communities, as well as all freedom-loving people. Mr. Speaker, even though the tragic events of the Turkish invasion took place so long ago on July 20, 1974, the pain and suffering is still felt because the divisions of the invasion still exist, unfortunately.

This week is a time for this body to solemnly remember the Turkish military invasion of the island of Cyprus, to mourn those who lost their lives in the invasion, and to condemn the ongoing Turkish occupation.

On July 20, 1974, in flagrant violation of international law, Turkey invaded Cyprus and violently captured the northern part of the island Cyprus' territory. As a result of the Turkish invasion and occupation, 160,000 Greek Cypriots, 70 percent of the population of the occupied area, were forcibly expelled from their homes. In addition, 5,000 Greek Cypriots were killed, and more than 1,400 Greek Cypriots, including four Americans of Cypriot descent, remain missing since the Turkish invasion, and their fate is still unknown.

As a result of the invasion and occupation, Greek and Turkish Cypriots were forcibly divided along ethnic lines and remain so to this day.

The United Nations has adopted numerous resolutions which reflect the universal condemnation of Turkey's invasion. Moreover, the European Court of Human Rights has found the Government of Turkey responsible for gross and systematic violations of human rights in Cyprus.

Cypriots should have the right to return to their homes, and the illegal settlers who were transported from Turkey to the occupied parts of Cyprus should relinquish their homesteads and properties to the rightful owners. Thirty-five years is 35 years too long for the island and people of Cyprus to endure an illegal occupation and division.

Negotiations that began with President Christofias and Turkish Cypriot leader Mehmet Ali Talat last year have provided some measure of hope. Negotiations are moving forward. The key to a successful outcome of the negotiating process and reunification of the island remains with Ankara. A solution to the Cyprus problem cannot be reached without Turkey's full and constructive cooperation. It is essential that Turkey exhibit the necessary political will that would enable the negotiations between the two communities in Cyprus to move forward. A solution must come from the Cypriots themselves and must serve the interests of the Cypriots.

Secretary Clinton promised me in a recent hearing that the administration would support a solution of the Cyprus problem and, specifically, a bicomunal, bizonal federation. The U.S. should use its influence toward Turkey to also actively and publicly support the process and the reunification of the island as a bicomunal and bizonal federation.

Mr. Speaker, let's hope the people of Cyprus won't have to suffer another year longer. Let us hope that Cyprus will once again be a unified nation where all freedom-loving Cypriots can live together in peace.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. DEFAZIO addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

30-SOMETHING WORKING GROUP

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2009, the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. MURPHY) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, we're here for the next 60 minutes to talk about the need to get health care, affordable accessible health care to all Americans; but before we do, I want to yield to my good friend from Ohio who's going to join us for this hour to share with us some pretty exciting news about his home district.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Well, we have in Youngstown, Ohio, we have a Youngstown business incubator, and we've had some debates on this floor about a variety of issues, earmarks, different things. And one of the issues that I have been pushing, and I know a lot of Members, is reinvestment back into communities in the Midwest that were once steel or rubber or industrial cities to invest in new technologies.

And we have been doing that in Youngstown, Ohio. We have a great business-to-business software incubator there. And recently in the latest edition or latest issue of Entrepreneur magazine, you may or may not be able to read, the 10 best cities to start a business, and down here in parenthesis: Youngstown, Ohio. Anyone? So we're in there with some major metropolitan areas across the country who have been doing great things, but in Youngstown, Ohio, in the Mahoning Valley we're emerging, I think, from years and years of steel-making into advanced manufacturing and business-to-business.

It's great. To the gentleman from Connecticut and the gentlelady from Maryland, this is the best issue of Entrepreneur magazine they've ever put out. And I commend to you this issue and read with great excitement, as we have.

And we have a local convention center there that's doing great and has made money for the first time in the second quarter and they're doing tremendous. We have got a lot of great shows. We've got downtown living. Anyway, it's happening like a lot of cities in Connecticut, I think, that have made comebacks.

So I wanted to just plug our local business incubator, thank Jim Costner who runs the incubator; Michael Brokerage who ran the company that was highlighted in here and look forward to our health care discussion as well, so that these small businesses can prosper in the future because we have a sane health care policy going here in the United States.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. If you pick up that issue, you can also read about pet airways and the shiny object of the month as well.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Absolutely. Whatever you need, it's all in here.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. It's a good issue.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. This is "the" issue. In fact, they may just wrap it up and say we're never going to have a better issue than the one we just issued so we're done.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. Well, congratulations, Mr. RYAN of Youngstown, on a very well-deserved accolade, and you know, in some way it's a good segue to what we're going to talk about tonight, which is the need for this Congress to pass health care reform that revitalizes our economy, that cuts the cost of providing health care to employees for the thousands of businesses in Youngstown, Ohio; in Connecticut; in Maryland that are right now struggling to match revenue with expenditures to cut the cost of health care for the millions of Americans who don't have it today and desperately need it, you know, cut the cost of health care for the Federal Government that right now is about to bankrupt itself through major increases every year in the amount of money that we have to put out for health care.

So, listen, families in my district, they didn't figure out that this economy was in trouble when the banks did and the investment houses did last October, November. You know, they knew this economy was in crisis long before that when they saw their wages stay flat over the last 10 years while their employer heaped more and more of the cost of health care on their backs.

They figured out that this economy was in trouble when they showed up to get an MRI and they were charged a \$200 deductible. They found out this economy was in trouble when they went to get health insurance in the new town, new State that they moved into and found out because their daughter had a complicated preexisting condition that they were uninsurable and that they were going to bear the full cost of care for their family.